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LETTER DATED 10 NOVEMBER 1994 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I should like to call to the attention of the members of the Security Council the attached statement of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Somalia. The Committee, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, includes representatives of United Nations organizations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations active in humanitarian assistance operations. The statement also reflects the conclusions of a special meeting convened at Nairobi on 24 and 25 October 1994, with the participation of all interested entities, to review the future of humanitarian operations in Somalia following the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II).

I believe that the statement will contribute to the deliberations of the Council and hope that members of the Council will give full consideration to the various issues raised therein.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI

Annex

Statement of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Somalia

During the 1992/1993 humanitarian emergency in Somalia, hundreds of thousands of lives were saved thanks to the massive relief operations undertaken by United Nations organizations and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations under the security protection of Unified Task Force (UNITAF) and United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) forces.

With the end of the acute emergency phase, Somalia has faded away from the world media's attention. The donor community is increasingly disillusioned by the failure of the national reconciliation process and is furthermore called upon to support new dramatic humanitarian situations elsewhere. The mandate of UNOSOM is scheduled to expire in March 1995, and with it, the important programme support and operational services which UNOSOM has provided to humanitarian relief operations.

Nevertheless, the United Nations organizations working in Somalia reconfirm their commitment to continue to the maximum extent possible emergency and rehabilitation activities even beyond the expiration of the UNOSOM mandate. Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations have played a vital role in this effort and, it is hoped, will continue to do so. The immediate goal is to continue to address the pressing needs of the most vulnerable groups, including nearly 900,000 externally and internally displaced persons representing close to 20 per cent of the total population. The hope is that the Somali leaders will rapidly end their destructive rivalry so that the country can engage in rehabilitation and reconstruction under acceptable conditions of security and stability.

Unfortunately, this is not possible in most regions of Somalia. Even the very basic community services such as health, water supply and primary education are unlikely to be sustained much beyond the withdrawal of external financial or management support. Banditry and threats to life and property continue to take a heavy toll on the capacity of relief workers to deliver assistance and launch sustainable rehabilitation programmes.

In fact, the security situation in most parts of the country has deteriorated steadily throughout 1994. The offices, staff quarters and warehouses of United Nations organizations and non-governmental organizations are regularly besieged and harassed by heavily armed gunmen who move freely in the streets of Mogadishu and in the countryside. The withdrawal of United Nations forces in the absence of a political settlement will exacerbate this situation and could result in the withdrawal of staff and the cessation of humanitarian activities in significant areas. Under such a scenario, any natural disaster or any return to the generalized lawlessness of the pre-UNITAF period would rapidly degenerate into a predictable new emergency and its intolerable consequences on human lives and the internal and external displacement of people.

To minimize the potential negative impact on humanitarian and rehabilitation activities, as the mandate of UNOSOM II draws to an end, it is important to ensure an orderly transition to the traditional mandates of United Nations organizations. This process should start as early as feasible so that new operational, security, coordination and management mechanisms can be put in place well before UNOSOM completes its mission.

Relief and development workers in Somalia stress that security at major airports and seaports as well as rescue and evacuation capacity remain essential to their work and their ability to field staff and carry out programmes. Without a continued military presence or new security arrangements, it will not be possible to provide the necessary assistance to the Somali people.

United Nations organizations have agreed to adopt a common and coordinated approach to retain or replace the essential programme support and operational services formerly provided by UNOSOM. They are committed to developing a common framework for action with the full participation of all operational partners. To this end, it is proposed that a United Nations coordination team be established, composed of senior representatives of United Nations organizations active in Somalia and chaired by the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), who will also serve as Humanitarian Coordinator. Full advantage will be taken of the differing security conditions in the various parts of the country to implement emergency and rehabilitation programmes whenever and wherever possible.

The Security Council is urged to support this process of transition by considering possible arrangements for the establishment of protected humanitarian operational bases at essential ports and airports, by authorizing the transfer to operational United Nations organizations and international non-governmental organizations of equipment and assets now being used by UNOSOM and by making available to the new coordination arrangement the core UNOSOM humanitarian and security staff as soon as possible. United Nations organizations urge that positive consideration be given to the funding of security requirements by a special allocation so as not to divert voluntary funds made available for humanitarian activities.

The international donor community has in the past generously supported humanitarian efforts in Somalia. Their continued support is essential to continuing these efforts after the withdrawal of UNOSOM military forces.

In the final analysis, all international assistance in Somalia must be founded on the basic principle of Somali responsibility. This means that the Somali people must determine the course of their future. Equally important, they must bear responsibility for ensuring conditions which will permit the effective implementation of humanitarian, rehabilitation and development programmes.